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"WHY THE EXCITEMENT ABOUT BRIDEY MURPHY?"

Speakers:

THE VERY REV. JAMES A. PIKE

DR. ASHLEY MONTAGU

DR. JEROME M. SCHNECK

Moderator:

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BULLETIN OF AMERICA'S TOWN MEETING OF THE AIR

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"WHY THE EXCITEMENT ABOUT BRIDEY MURPHY?"

DR. WITMAN: Good evening friends. The country is in the grip of a mass excitement over the case of Bridey Murphy. There can be no doubt about that. There are a number of very important questions to be asked about this case, but, first of all, let us get the basic facts of what has been going on.

It all started back in November of 1952 when Mr. Morey Bernstein, an amateur hypnotist, undertook an experiment in hypnotic regression with a friend and neighbor known as Ruth Simmons. Mr. Bernstein's interest in reincarnation led him to try to lead Ruth Simmons not only back to her early childhood, which he had successfully done before, but beyond this into an earlier life.

It was during this experiment that the subject began to discuss her experiences as Bridey Murphy living in Ireland during the nineteenth century as the wife of an Irish lawyer. Her comments were recorded on tape by Mr. Bernstein and, together with later recordings, became the central point of a book he wrote and published this January. Since then, the popular reaction has been enormous.

While in the hypnotic trance, Ruth Simmons described life in nineteenth century Ireland, used words otherwise unknown to her and which were presumably in Irish usage at the time, described her homelife, many detailed and intimate experiences from her childhood in Cork and gave detailed descriptions of the countryside. She even described her sensations at death and told of watching her own funeral. Right or wrong, we Americans have decided this is too much to take calmly!

What are the implications of this report? Does it affirm the doctrine of reincarnation? Does it open new areas for hypnosis? Why have we reacted so heartily to it? What is all the excitement about? To answer that, we have three people who will help us solve the problem.

First we shall hear from Dr. Ashley Montagu, who is a leading anthropologist. Among his books are "Direction of Human Development" and the very controversial one on "The Natural Superiority of Women." He has served as consultant to UNESCO in its study of Race, and as Director of Research for the New Jersey Committee for Mental Health and Physical Development. We're delighted to have you here and now to hear from you, Dr. Montagu!

DR. MONTAGU: Ladies and gentlemen, what is surprising about the Bridey Murphy phenomenon is that anyone should be surprised about it. History is full of instances in which those who claim to have returned from the dead, or to have communicated with them, or to have any evidence of any kind of a life after death or of reincarnation, have acquired an enormous number of followers.

Why have such people invariably succeeded in attracting so many believers? The answer, it seems to me as a student of these phenomena, is principally that men refuse to accept the notion that at death they vanish into husks and the formless ruin of oblivion. They want to believe in a life forever. They cannot accept this life as the beginning and the end. In an age of such extraordinary personal insecurity as that in which we live, the quest for certainty, for the reassurance that if all has not gone as it should have in this life, that there will be another chance in another life, has become a matter of deep emotional significance to thousands of human beings in our society. Therefore, when a book like "Bridey Murphy" comes along, which through the agency of a scientifically proven method, namely, hypnotism, in which a human being recalls a former existence -- the insecure, the doubtful, the worried, the concerned, and the escapist, are at once profoundly interested. For here, at least, and at last, is a straw to clutch at. After all, they reason, here may be the first genuine proof

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of the certainty of certainty, of the certainty of continuing life in which one forgets all about this one and one can, untrammelled by unpleasant memories -- except when recovered in bits and snippets under hypnotism -- enjoy life anew. What these people are looking for is the assurance that in this uncertain world there is one thing of which one can be certain and that is that death is not the end, but the begining of a new and almost certainly a better life. It is, I think, as simple as that. Those, alas, who do not know how to live do not know how to die.

But, this is not the only kind of person who is attracted by the phenomenon of Bridey Murphy. There are those who see in Bridey Murphy a confirmation of their beliefs in an eternal life or in reincarnation, or some form of physical immortality. Others see in this book a confirmation of their religious beliefs. Still others find the work opposed to their religious beliefs.

In any event, the excitement about "The Search for Bridey Murphy" once again proves that our educational system has failed to teach many persons how to use their minds or how to evaluate evidence critically.

DR. WITMAN: Thank you very much, Dr. Montagu. And now our second speaker is Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at State University of New York's College of Medicine, Jerome M. Schneck. He is the author of "Hypnosis in Modern Medicine," and "Studies in Scientific Hypnosis." He was educated at Cornell University and Long Island College of Medicine and received his psychiatric training at the Menninger Clinic. Dr. Schneck is a former president of the Society for Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis. May we hear from you, Dr. Schneck!

DR. SCHNECK: The book about Bridey Murphy involves two major issues -- hypnosis and reincarnation. The excitement and concern about this book reflects, at least in part, concerns about these issues. One involves the perpetual interest, thought and perplexity about life and death. Is there one life or more? How can we know? And, what does it all mean? If yes, or no, how should it affect our attitudes toward the life we know -- and so on. The other issue involves the ideas and attitudes which the hypnotic relationship represents. This relationship involves two or more people and, as such, it reflects thinking and concern about close relationships between people. Hypnosis specifically engenders concern about problems of submission, control, awareness of attitudes and feelings of which we may not be aware ordinarily, and the usual conceptions and misconceptions about memory and unconsciousness. On to these major issues is projected, in all this excitement, a variety of inner conflicts harbored by many of us. This interest serves as a focal point for discussion, among people, of thoughts harbored within which ordinarily we might hesitate to express. To speak of them now, in relation to a topic of general attention, is regarded as especially permissible and acceptable socially. Mutual fears, and thoughts held in common, can be verbalized with greater freedom.

The fact that the book about Bridey Murphy, when viewed in scientific perspective, has serious shortcomings, and the fact that these shortcomings have been publicized already, does not appear, as yet, to have diminished seriously the general interest in this material. I am of the impression that the reasons for this have to do with the points just outlined. It is not simply a question of how accurate or inaccurate are the facts presented. It is not a question of how true or untrue are the views expressed. It is rather a question of how much the opinions and data outlined stir up fears, conflicts and curiosity related to inner concerns of which we may be aware in part, or not consciously aware of at all. It is this, I believe, which is an important element in the excitement about Bridey Murphy. The lack of adequate understanding of scientific hypnosis by amateur enthusiasts and uninformed readers complicates further the issue under discussion. As questions get under way, we may be able to correct some of the widespread misconceptions.

DR. WITMAN: Thank you very much, Dr. Schneck. Our final speaker now is The Very Rev. James A Pike, who is Dean of the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, and Adjunct Professor of Religion and Law at Columbia University. Among his books are "Beyond Anxiety" and "Doing the Truth." Before entering his

theological career, Dean Pike practiced law -- serving four years as attorney for the United States Securities and Exchange Commission. Dean Pike!

DEAN PIKE: I don't know if I'm on this program as one of the uninformed readers of the book, or as a representative of religion or law. As far as religion is concerned, I think the book is, in a measure, irrelevant because such intimations as there may be of the existence of spirits and ghosts -- and there are always some apparent evidences of these things -- or of some form of reincarnation, if this could be proven by scientific method it might be interesting, but I think it would be religiously irrelevant because the main stream of Judaeo-Christian heritage has never interested itself very much in immortality. Sometimes, carelessly, we talk about the immortality of the soul -- that's a philosophic idea which has been held rather widely and which is fairly plausible, actually, but the Christian Creeds, for example, and later Judaism, which also was concerned about the afterlife, always talk in terms of the resurrection of the body. Now, of course, the more sophisticated forms of that view never implied that the particular body that I now possess would be resurrected. It obviously is renewed every seven years and crumbles in the grave. But, rather that the whole personality of which the body is the outward symbol and the only means of expression in communication -- the whole personality continues and the man remains himself forever.

This is quite in contrast with the general kind of Eastern religions in which one's spirit is absorbed into some kind of oversoul and an individual loses his personality and individuation. In fact, it affirms that in the life to come I will be me -- if I may use that bad use of pronouns -- I will be me and you will be you and I will be more myself than I am now. Now, that particular phase for us is not in the way of escape from this life. It gives added meaning to this life. It means that our decisions now and our development now and our interrelationships now have eternal and abiding purpose and significance in terms of God's final fulfillment of all things and, therefore, the here and now becomes doubly intensified in importance.

In viewing this as an uninformed reader, I could say that I was first attracted like any curious person. I think there is one place that accounts for some of the excitement -- just plain curiosity, entirely apart from what it may mean to one's own personal fulfillment. As it has developed, as more facts have come out about the story, it would appear very dubious that the story can be factually justified. However, the whole concept of the unconscious mind in which much of our past may be brought forth by those who are experts at doing this and the concept of telepathy by which we may be in relationship with the minds or unconscious minds of others, even at a distance has, of course, some scientific basis, at least, that should leave us open to the idea. If, for example, this book could be scientifically authenticated in a way it so far has not been, I still would not be disturbed in my basic conviction about the continuity of conscious personality for those who have come in contact with God's eternal gift of life. The fate of mankind generally in this regard may remain a mystery. Men have always speculated about reincarnation. There seems to be some assumption that men were thinking about it when Jesus said of the man born blind, when it was asked Him -- is this man in this condition because of his father's sins or because of his own sins, when He declined to trace it to either -- the fact remains that somebody, at least, was assuming that because of this man's own sins, he was born blind; which assumes, at least in the mind of the questioner, there was a previous life for this man in which some kind of a guilt had brought him a punishment.

As a speculation, this is quite permissible. As a basis of faith, as a basis of a world view, as a basis of what life means now, it can never take the place of what is a deep religious conviction.

As to the excitement being based upon man's hope for some validation of an eternal conscious existence, I would say that these very facts would fall short of that. If I feel life hasn't been so good to me now and, therefore, I would like to have another chance, I want to be me, and there is nothing in this story, even if true, which indicates that that is what's happened. The present Bridey Murphy -- named Simmons, I

believe -- does not regard herself, or, at least did not before hypnosis -- which most people are not able to have the benefit or danger of -- she did not regard herself as the continuing personality of Bridey Murphy. And so, this doesn't answer that deepest journey. The only thing that will answer it is the great element of Judaeo-Christian faith which offers continuous conscious personality into eternal life.

DR. WITMAN: Thank you very much, Dean Pike. Now, as is customary, these gentlemen will comment upon each other's opening observations and then we will pitch in with some other points and some other questions. Who wants to speak first to the opening remarks? Dr. Schneck.

DR. SCHNECK: I would like to put a question to Dean Pike. This isn't directly in line with some of the things that he has just mentioned, but perhaps he can comment about it. Since the war and especially since the onset of the atomic age there appears to have been an increased interest in science in general among people and I wonder whether he feels that there has also been an increased interest in religion as such. If the answer is Yes in regard to religion -- I'm not quite sure whether it is going to be -- I was wondering whether Dean Pike felt that such increase in religion as such does go hand in hand with at least some of the intense interest shown in the material brought forward in this book?

DEAN PIKE: I would think there is an increase both in science and religion. What that means in terms of people's betterment and greater depth of understanding is another question, but certainly your books, Doctor, and mine -- one in the scientific field and the other in religious fields -- are better read than they would have been twenty years ago.

DR. WITMAN: Are they better read because of Bridey Murphy?

DEAN PIKE: Well, that would be the next part of the question. Whether this book represents this increased interest in both science and religion, I don't know. I think this book, quite apart from this other development, would have been interesting at any time because of what I call "curiosity." I bought it myself for that reason, long before I knew I would have to use it professionally on this program. I was curious about it.

DR. WITMAN: Dr. Montagu, do you want to comment on the opening statements?

DR. MONTAGU: I would like to say a few words about my experience in reading the book. I wasn't going to read the book because from what I had read by way of reviews and heard by way of discussion from various colleagues, I felt that I had a fair enough idea of its contents. But, when I was asked to speak on this program, I obtained a copy of the book and read it and, much to my surprise, I found that Mr. Bernstein had a ring of authenticity about him. I felt that far from being a man who is in any way interested in distorting the evidence, that he was really attempting to do what any scientist would do to the best of his ability to discover what he was dealing with. Now, my criticism of Mr. -- I was about to call him Murphy -- Mr. Bernstein, (I don't want to reincarnate him so early in his life -- he's quite a young man) my criticism of him is that he doesn't have a scientifically trained mind and I would say that this is no reflection on the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania or upon him. The scientific attitude is essentially summed up in the following words: That it is not a matter of belief or disbelief, but of dispassionate inquiry. And this is not what Mr. Bernstein conveyed to me, that he was dispassionately interested in what he was after.

DR. WITMAN: I am going to open up the discussion at this phase of our evening's consideration with a specific question. It seems to me that we have to address ourselves now to the matter of hypnotism. Certainly this is the essence of the book, it's the basic premise, the operation upon which the book rests. Let me ask you, what is hypnotism? Let's ask Dr. Schneck, first of all. Can you answer that question? Is there a way in which you can define hypnotism? What is this that Mr. Bernstein was doing that Dr. Montagu a moment ago said he wasn't reporting with too scientific an approach?

DR. SCHNECK: That question is one of the most difficult to answer actually -- what is hypnosis. It has been described in various ways. One description is that it is an altered state of consciousness which is brought about by certain specialized techniques. Another description is that it is a state of altered consciousness in which an individual is perhaps more suggestable than he might be in his ordinary waking state. It's a rather difficult point to answer. In the main, from a very practical point of view, it's a state that is usually induced with suggestions that have to do with permitting the subject to become increasingly relaxed and perhaps somewhat drowsy and dreamy, perhaps somewhat sleepy, and during this somewhat altered state, he functions in ways which frequently are somewhat a bit different from his ordinary waking state. That's a very general answer. In some respects it is rather vague, but it just has to be that way because the technicalities involved are really highly complex.

DEAN PIKE: One of the reviewers, I think the "Saturday Review," pointed out that Mr. Bernstein was really quite a good hypnotist because this man felt drowsy after two chapters of reading in the book.

DR. WITMAN: Dr. Montagu, do you want to add to this definition of hypnotism?

DR. MONTAGU: I would like to add to the "Saturday Review's" statement, namely, that Mr. Bernstein is obviously such a convincing writer that one man who read the book immediately went to his lawyer and had his will altered in favor of himself.

DR. WITMAN: At least we are satisfied that, regardless of the reporting which Mr. Bernstein did and to which you referred, Dr. Montagu, he at least is a hypnotist and has been successful further than Bridey Murphy, herself. Hypnotism, then, is a means by which a person is brought to a state different from his conscious state. Is it possible, therefore, to bring a person so far into a different, other than conscious, state as to carry them back to childhood as he refers to in his book on hypnotic regression?

DR. SCHNECK: Some people who are known as good hypnotic subjects become so emotionally involved in it -- by emotionally involved I imply "normally" involved, normally emotionally involved -- to a degree where memory is enhanced considerably and where they can, in fact, seemingly relive previous life experiences, some of which date back to their very early years. That is a scientific fact and that has been done frequently, both in psychological experimental situations and during the course of psychiatric treatment.

DR. WITMAN: Let's take the next step. I'd like to know what you think about Mr. Bernstein's experiment in taking Ruth Simmons back beyond childhood, into another and previous life.

DR. MONTAGU: Let me add this. In addition to regressing and taking people back into a state of altered consciousness where they can recall seemingly very early memories of their infancy, there are some students who have actually claimed -- and I am thinking of four independent investigators -- who have claimed from their own studies not only to have taken people back to the stages of their early infancy, but who have gotten back into the womb and, in one case, even recovered memories -- that is to say, the patient produces, the subject produces memories -- in one case which are recollections so it is claimed, of the moment of conception. Of course, the claim made by Mr. Bernstein is that he has taken this even a stage further. Mr. Bernstein makes reference to some of these resurges.

DEAN PIKE: I think that is an invasion of privacy -- that particular memory that you referred to.

DR. MONTAGU: This is, of course, a reference to a recently published article of mine in the "Saturday Review" on "Privacy." This would suggest, of course, that what the human being who is attempting to recover or, at least, producing memories of his life in the womb is doing when he is recovering at the later stage, is to reproduce, as it were, a room with a view.

DR. WITMAN: Then we are not talking about something that is completely outlandish are we, when we report Morey Bernstein's experiments?

DEAN PIKE: Might I say, even in terms of recovering scenes in the womb, isn't it possible that some of this is a different kind of process? For example, things that

one has been told as a child, or one's conceptions about what this might have been, there is that psychological regression that often occurs in people where they imagine themselves at earlier ages and wish for their childhood, and even wish for a womb kind of protection. Can't part of this be the reflection of that, rather than of an actual historical moment of time in the womb?

DR. MONTAGU: Exactly -- a womb with a view, as it were.

DR. WITMAN: In other words, it's the natural desire of the individual or the personality to seek security.

DR. SCHNECK: I think that is an important point that Dean Pike introduced. The important point is that we have to distinguish as much as possible between fact and fantasy. Anyone who is sufficiently intent on doing so, can learn how to hypnotize. It's a simple process. Most of the work is, in fact, done by the subject and not the hypnotist. The point is that inducing a hypnosis alone is of minor importance. When you're dealing with hypnosis in any scientific sense, you're dealing with complex human beings and complex psychological issues and we, working in scientific fields, believe that it is important for any individual working in such an area to be trained psychologically and to have some knowledge, the knowledge available, of the intricacies of personality functioning before he literally plays around in a territory that he knows nothing about and where he might affect, unwarrantedly, the personality functioning of his subject.

DR. WITMAN: Let's get this perfectly straight. Are you saying, Dr. Schneck, that it could conceivably be dangerous for amateur hypnotists to try hypnosis?

DR. SCHNECK: I am saying that it is and that hypnosis by amateur enthusiasts runs the risk of stirring up anxieties in subjects -- anxieties which the subjects themselves may not be aware of at the time and which the amateur hypnotist may not be aware of at the time. And even if they were aware of it, they would not be in a position to deal with the very problems and anxieties which they have stirred up. Therefore, it is our feeling in professional circles that the use of hypnosis should be limited to professionally qualified persons.

DR. WITMAN: That seems to me to be a very important point because I understand from my reading of the public press that there is a good deal of experimentation going on by amateurs right now, as a result of this Bridey Murphy book. Let me also pursue another point which I feel was raised here and that is, you are saying, are you, Dr. Schneck, that -- and also you, Dr. Montagu -- that there is possibly an explanation in this Bridey Murphy case which springs from the fact that Ruth Simmons was actually expressing personality characteristics and that she was not, in fact, recalling a prior existence. Does this mean that hypnosis is related to psychiatry? Does it mean that you can use hypnosis in the development of a psychiatric approach to personality adjustments?

DR. SCHNECK: Very definitely. There are a number of people who are trained in the use of scientific hypnosis in the field of medicine and, specifically, its widest use in medicine is in the field of psychiatry. It's one general technique, among others, of working with personality difficulties and trying to solve personality problems. And it certainly has its legitimate use there.

DR. MONTAGU: I would, of course, very strongly second the remarks of Dr. Schneck with reference to the amateur indulgence in what is essentially a scientific procedure and which can, in its own way, be about as dangerous as monkeying with radioactive materials by someone who doesn't know what the consequences are likely to be -- and which are quite likely to be very disturbing when engaged in, as we know from many experiences with amateurs who have indulged in this. But I would say this -- that reading the book, the question having been raised as to the authenticity of what has been called the memories that she is alleged to have recollected, namely, Ruth Simmons, that I am strongly impressed by the paucity of these so-called recollections. I would say that any ordinary American who has been brought up for the first 29 years in this country has probably heard a great many statements about Irish folklore, about Irish names, about Irish food and Irish customs, and would be able in a state of a different

consciousness and is induced in hypnosis, to identify one's self with such as person and reproduce what one has heard, but certainly not experienced in a former existence.

DEAN PIKE: I would second all these points, particularly the importance of some caution as to the use by amateurs of any such processes and also caution about assuming immediately the most outlandish explanation of a given set of phenomena. I would say though that a certain openness is always called for, both by scientist and theologian, in the sense that we cannot likewise dogmatically say that none of this could be. I'm not saying that when I second these comments and agree thoroughly that we have in this book no evidence of a particular thesis that seems to appeal to the author. On the other hand, we have no evidence to the contrary, but it seems logical to follow the line we have been following, that if there are other explanations which seem more palpable, those are the ones which, for the moment, should be our working hypothesis.

DR. SCHNECK: In extension of the remarks by Dean Pike and Dr. Montagu, I want to mention that not only is there a paucity of information in these recollections, but the most remarkable thing about the book is the fact that we know so very little about the actual life, here and now, of the subject that is the particular woman under discussion. The book gives amazingly little information about this woman's early years, what happened to her during the course of her development, who brought her up, etc. The little information that we do know doesn't help the book very much. For example, I believe -- if I recall correctly -- that, in fact, parenthetically, it mentions that she was reared by a Norwegian uncle and, I think, a German-Scotch-Irish aunt. Now, there you have some Irish background to begin with, but nothing further about it. We know nothing more about that. Now, not in the book but elsewhere I have heard, and I really don't know whether this is actually true, that both her parents were, in fact, part Irish. If that is so, the thing that we would certainly want to know is what happened to this girl, what stories did she hear, what was told to her, what was her life here and now actually like? In professional circles we feel that if we had a great deal of information, a real personality study of this individual of her life here and now, we certainly would understand much better what it was that went into the formulations that came to the fore under hypnosis during this experimentation.

DR. MONTAGU: To illustrate the point just made by Dr. Schneck, if you take, for example, myself, who has never been in Japan or China, and you hypnotized me and you, knowing that I have never been in Japan or China, said, "Now, tell me what you were like in a former state?" and suggested to me that I was born or brought up in Japan, it is highly probable that I would identify myself with a Japanese or Chinese figure and reproduce everything I had ever heard in my life about China and Japan; even to the tilling of the ground and how I was made to grow a queue by my father and how little respect I had for my mother, because I know these things but I have never actually experienced them. And this is what precisely seems to have been done in the case of Mrs. Ruth Simmons.

DR. WITMAN: All right, now what we have been talking about here is we have been trying to identify what we mean by hypnotism and although these scientific experts here are not satisfied with the kind of definition they have had to give because of limited time, we have said that hypnotism is the means by which the conscious self of the personality is removed to the background and another kind of expression is made possible. Dr. Schneck is frowning at me -- I guess he doesn't like that. No, he likes that. He says that also it is a process which should be viewed as being able to be used psychiatrically and should not be looked upon as a plaything. In fact, all of these gentlemen have warned against the amateur use of hypnosis which can lead to very damaging consequences. What happened to Ruth Simmons has been the subject of discussion now for the last few minutes and I think that, by and large, these gentlemen have come to a position that probably what happened was that she was reflecting personality aspects, experiences and recollections from her own past, her own childhood and that this does not necessarily evidence the fact that she was reflecting a former life, beyond

the one in which she is presently living. Also, these gentlemen have made a good deal, it seems to me, of the fact that there is an absence of scientific evidence in the presentation of the book, in the pattern of the book, in the reporting, etc. Dr. Schneck stressed the fact that this was particularly true in the absence of a detailed analysis of the kind of person which Ruth Simmons -- I almost said Bridey Murphy -- was, in fact. Now, let's go on to something else that I think we need to consider very carefully. If all of this is true, then why are we having all this excitement in the country? Let's go back to our original subject -- "Why the Excitement About Bridey Murphy?"

DR. MONTAGU: I've already given my position, which I believe is largely associated with the insecurities of this present life and the unsatisfied life which most people seem to have lived, and the hope that in some other state they may be able to achieve what they have failed to achieve in this state. But I would also add this: That though this is an age of science which is sometimes described as the secular religion of our times, I would say that from my own experience that there are a very large number of people in our culture who do not approve of science and who may take this book as an evidence that the sacred cow of science is not all that it was cracked up to be -- to mix a metaphor.

DR. WITMAN: As a matter of fact, Dr. Montagu, I was aware of the fact that you had answered the question at the outset in your statement and I wondered whether any of the other members of the panel weren't going to tackle the question that you raised, or the statement, and that you said that men want to live forever -- they want certainty. Dean Pike is raising his hand.

DEAN PIKE: I challenge it partially, in this sense. I don't think that this particular solution, if true -- which we have had some doubt about, to say the least -- meets that particular need. Now, there are many human yearnings, deep ones, universal ones. There is a yearning for food, a yearning for sexual fulfillment, a yearning for community, etc. For every one of these deep and abiding human yearnings, there is, in fact, a fulfillment -- not always for everyone at every moment, but there is such a thing. This universal fulfillment for eternal life, in one form or another, I believe, has a matching fulfillment, but this isn't the one people are yearning for. They want to be themselves. The fact that I might be reincarnated as someone else, not conscious of my present existence, except through having met Mr. Bernstein perchance in another life, doesn't meet that particular need.

DR. MONTAGU: Why not?

DEAN PIKE: It's not a new break for me -- it's a new break for somebody else, maybe.

DR. MONTAGU: If, for example, you don't like yourself in this incarnation, you would embrace the idea of being someone else in another.

DEAN PIKE: But I wouldn't be me then.

DR. MONTAGU: There would be sort of a continuity.

DEAN PIKE: What sort? Only a sort of continuity with a few fragments of facts which some hypnotist might bring out of me, but this continuity was no good for Bridey Murphy in Mrs. Simmons. She wasn't even aware of the continuity.

DR. MONTAGU: Well, one of the charms of reincarnation in this particular Bridey Murphy form is that you are not aware of your former incarnation.

DEAN PIKE: Is that a charm though? Is that the point about my wanting to go on and fulfill myself in a way that maybe I haven't been able to here? It's not me, or I'm not conscious that it is me. That would be my doubt as to whether the wish for eternal life, which I grant is a universal wish -- and I would think an appropriate one -- is fulfilled by this kind of solution.

DR. WITMAN: Let us turn to our studio audience now and see what their questions are.

QUESTIONER: Dr. Schneck, why are some people so readily susceptible to hypnosis while others cannot be hypnotized to any degree whatsoever?

DR. SCHNECK: There are several things that enter into susceptibility to hypnosis. One, we feel, has to do with the basic psychological makeup -- the constitutional makeup -- of the individual involved. Then again, it depends on his psychological status at the particular time he is being hypnotized and the same individual may be more hypnotizable on some occasions than on other occasions. Then again, of course, it depends on the particular technique used with him and, to an extent, on the personality of the hypnotist himself. So there are many, many things that influence the particular hypnotizability of an individual at any particular time.

QUESTIONER: Dr. Montagu, if it is true, as scientists say, that matter is indestructible, would it not be logical to say that the same thing is true with spiritual or unseen things?

DR. MONTAGU: No, I don't think it would be logical to say that because so far as mind is concerned, so far as spirit is concerned, this is merely a pattern of biochemical electrical functions, which is about as near as we can get to describing it crudely, and is simply the function of matter. When the matter is destroyed, for example; when the body, for example, decays, the matter takes on another form and the first law of conservation of energy, for example, takes care of that. But your thoughts, your ideas, are not actually preserved and the function of your body is not preserved.

QUESTIONER: Dean Pike, in Asia about a billion people believe in reincarnation which is somewhat strange for us orthodox Christians to accept. Any person who has been revived after drowning or after electrical shock has never reported any consciousness about life after death. Paracelsus stated in 1512 that it does not matter what you believe in is true or false -- the question of belief has the same effect upon you -- that's the miraculous power in belief. Whatever is this mysterious X we call belief. Even in the experiments of Rhine at Duke we have seen if the person believes in the success of a thing, it makes better results so there is this question of the mysterious X. Is that part of what the Bard said, when he let Hamlet end with, "And the rest is silence?"

DEAN PIKE: That's a very profound question. I'm glad you mentioned how many people do believe in reincarnation in the world and that is one of the reasons why we cannot brush it aside too quickly, and it is also one reason why one should be open to whatever is proven. But, on the other hand, there is no convincing proof of reincarnation and I don't think there is convincing proof of the Judaeo-Christian view of the continuity of personality. I believe, with the questioner, that we are dealing here with faith. I think it is a plausible faith. It's one which has meaning for the here and now. It is not an escape from the here and now. It gives a larger dimension to the here and now. But it is on faith that one accepts it -- not on proof -- and, therefore, I had said earlier and I think this further explains the reason I said it, that whatever is shown by some of this fragmentary data, it is, in the last analysis, religiously unimportant.

DR. WITMAN: The last questioner made reference to Dr. Rhine and I think we all know that Dr. Rhine has been conducting some experiments for a number of years in extrasensory perception. I wonder if you would tell us whether there is any relationship between extrasensory perception and this Bridey Murphy case? Is it tied together? I do know that Mr. Bernstein reports that he went down to see Dr. Rhine.

DR. MONTAGU: Certainly, Mr. Bernstein thought that there was some relationship and I know Dr. Rhine personally, a very admirable scientist, who is dispassionately investigating what he calls "extrasensory perception." The relationship would be, of course, if such a thing as extrasensory perception exists, namely, that some persons possess the ability to discover at a distance or, unseen before their eyes, what is going on in the minds of others, or is actually occurring in the world at large; that this may be related to the same process which causes people under hypnosis to recover so-called memories.

QUESTIONER: My question is for Dr. Schneck, but may I just briefly refer to the matter that Dr. Montagu just referred to. The British Society for Psychic Research

some years ago summarized their experience over 75 years and they came to the conclusion that many of these things were simply not proven. That included extrasensory perception, clairvoyance, telepathy, precognition, psychokinesis and survival of the personality.

DR. MONTAGU: Yes, I agree with that judgment.

QUESTIONER: I would like to have Dr. Schneck's impression of a statement by the secretary of the American Psychological Association -- "Scientific evidence says that hypnosis is an explosive thing to play with." What do you think?

DR. SCHNECK: I think that when the secretary of the American Psychological Association made that comment -- and I haven't heard about it so I am assuming your statement is correct -- he undoubtedly was referring to the use of hypnosis by amateur enthusiasts, and not by professional individuals for the very reasons that I outlined a moment ago. As a matter of fact, I would go along with his statement with that particular reservation. I am pretty sure that he had that particular meaning in mind because, as is well known, in a variety of areas quite reputable psychologists do, in fact, experiment with the use of hypnosis in connection with certain psychological investigations that they have undertaken.

QUESTIONER: Dean Pike, doesn't the theory of reincarnation run into many unforeseen complications and handicaps with the variations in world population, such as coming out even with the number of bodies and souls? In India, for instance, Hindus have to take refuge in bodies of animals after famines that decimated the population and the world population being greater now than ever before, what about the extra needed souls?

DEAN PIKE: Maybe the reason there is such overpopulation in India is that they believe in reincarnation. I think the question involves speculative matters that I would not be able to comment on because I'm not accepting a belief in reincarnation. What its consequences would be in those complications mentioned and many others I think we could add, both for theology, science and the state of the world, I would not want to go on and explore.

QUESTIONER: Dr. Montagu, one of the elements about the Bridey Murphy book is curiosity, as the good Dean stressed so eloquently. I noticed that the book did not become a best seller in the New York area until last week or two weeks ago and it has been selling rather well on the West Coast and other parts of the country for several weeks. Are there any social implications involved there? We're generally first when anything like this comes up.

DR. MONTAGU: Very interesting, because the journal of studies in alcohol has just published the fact that regionally in the United States, the highest alcoholic rate, bar none, almost twice as high as any other region, is on the West Coast and particularly in San Francisco. There may be a correlation here.

QUESTIONER: Dr. Schneck, where would you say a child prodigy inherits his extreme knowledge in a certain subject that cannot be traced to blood heredity, such as musicians, mathematicians, etc., at the age of four?

DR. SCHNECK: I have no idea. I don't know, but that particular topic has its own intrinsic merit and interest and certainly is something which some people in scientific areas are quite interested in and are investigating. I'm sorry to say that I don't have the answer for you.

DR. MONTAGU: May I answer that question as far as it can be answered. You see, human beings inherit chromosomes on which there are about 1250 little chemical packages. Since there are 24 of these, there are about 30,000 of these little chemical packages. When an ovum is fertilized, when a baby is created from its parental and maternal stock, these little chemical packages come together and are shuffled around at random virtually, like so many cards, so that two idiots can give rise to a genius, and two geniuses can give rise to an idiot, and all the variations in between -- and this is the explanation.

DR. WITMAN: Then it is not necessarily a case of reincarnation.

QUESTIONER: Dr. Montagu, what relationship do you give to transgressions back into the past with this "I have been here before" feeling that we have looked on?

DR. MONTAGU: Deja-vue, or, as it is known, false recognition. No one really knows but one of the best answers, in fact the first publication that I ever committed was on this subject in 1926, -- the best explanation that has been given is that the two hemispheres of the brain which normally work precisely together, one actually, for some reason or another, lags behind the other and so you get, as it were, a double experience of the same perception. This is one explanation.

QUESTIONER: This transgression that she made into the past, could it have been as we know a subject that she was subjected to by thought telepathy?

DR. MONTAGU: It could be, but I would say highly improbable.

QUESTIONER: Dean Pike, how can you really know if there is such a thing as reincarnation? We do not know of any individual who has ever come back to tell us what the hereafter is. If it is a much better world to live in, I think we need it very much today.

DEAN PIKE: I would agree as to this comment when it comes to reincarnation. As to our belief in eternal life, as I said before, this is on faith, not on proof. For those of us whose faith is centered on Jesus Christ and His promises, we believe in His Resurrection both because of His promise of it and of the faith of those who surrounded Him and experienced His resurrected life. But this is not the same thing as a person who comes back and reports on his previous reincarnation.

QUESTIONER: Dr. Montagu, would you describe exactly what procedure you would consider a dispassionate and scientific method in proving or disproving a story of a past life revealed?

DR. MONTAGU: In the first place, I would take this particular subject and expose her to a number of well trained hypnotists who have had experience and who have about as good a knowledge of what they are doing as one could expect. Then, see what one gets under these conditions. But I would emphasize, beyond all other things, what Dr. Schneck has already stated, namely, the importance of getting the life history of this particular subject.

DR. WITMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, I am quite convinced that this program has not laid Bridey Murphy to rest, but I am sure that it has helped to clarify some of the thinking of all of us in regard to "The Search for Bridey Murphy." We certainly have tried to answer the question of why this excitement has occurred.

We want to thank our speakers for this, The Very Rev. James A. Pike, Dr. Ashley Montagu and Dr. Jerome M. Schneck, for their contributions to our analysis of tonight's problem.
